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*At the End of
the Trail*



At the End of the Trail

A STORY OF THE
NEW JERSEY INDIANS

BY

MINNIE MAY MONKS



WINBEAM

WINBEAM LODGE :: WEST BROOK VALLEY, N. J.

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AT THE END OF THE TRAIL

Up in the northern part of New Jersey there is a little valley in the heart of the mountains, and where now stands an old farm-house, smoke once curled upward from a group of wigwams, the home of a small tribe of Indians.

In an English settlement in the valley of the Passaic there lived, at this time, a young Englishman named Allen, and probably no white man had more friends among the Indians than he. Tall, strong, well built, with a graceful swing to his shoulders as he walked, dressed in fringed buckskin, a deer-skin cap on his curly head, he was good to look at. Besides, there was a happy recklessness in his friendly manner, and a merry twinkle in the clear blue of his eye that never failed to please. From the time he could remember, love for the wilderness had possessed him, and he was never so happy as when he followed the trails and made friends among the Indians.

Early one clear, cool morning in middle May he filled his knapsack with food, slung it over his shoulder, picked up his fishing

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fork and rifle, and started out for a hunting trip, stopping, as was his custom, for his friend Red Fox, an Indian brave who lived nearby. Finding that Red Fox had gone on a trapping expedition, he traveled on alone. From Totowa he followed a trail through Preakness to Pompton Plains, an old Indian village where several trails converged, one running south through Pequannock to Hoboken, another extending west to Lake Hopatcong, and a number of short ones leading to various fishing places along the water courses.

Allen chose a narrow trail running north, a trail new and unexplored to him. Here and there, as he crossed the plains, he passed a low-roofed stone house built by some sturdy Dutch settler, but the farther north he traveled the wilder and more beautiful the way, and now he came to Yapewi Trail along the river valley of the Wanaque, and here was promise of good game, for, as he rounded a sharp bend in the river, he caught a glimpse of a red deer browsing by the water's edge.

"This is luck," he thought, as he stepped forward cautiously; but as he moved a dry twig cracked sharply under his foot. At the sound a big buck deer suddenly faced

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around, then with a wide leap plunged into the thicket, with the whole herd following close on his heels; they crashed through the underbrush and were gone before Allen could swing his rifle to his shoulder.

Somewhat chagrined, he strode on with eyes and ears keenly alert, but out of all the wood noises not once did his practiced sense distinguish the sharp, dainty tread of a deer. As he followed the trail he came to a huge gray rock rising from the water. It was gently sloping on the top and there had been a fire built there recently. From the signs, he knew it was the Council Rock of some Indian tribe. As he walked out to its edge he saw an Indian in a canoe fast disappearing down the river.

Presently he came to a turn in the trail, where a mountain brook joined its waters with those of the larger stream. Here he turned and followed the brook west, plunging into a rough and mountainous region. Once he shot off his rifle, and as the sharp report echoed from the surrounding mountain walls there was a flurry of wings above him, and small game scurried across his path in all directions; but no deer appeared. Once he thought he spied a fawn in the deep shadows of the forest, and he crawled up

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stealthily—to find it was only a bare, brown rock flecked with sunlight.

“Fooled again!” he exclaimed, as he turned aside to skirt the bank of the stream, which now flowed through a forest of evergreen, their branches so closely interlocked that they shut out the sunlight. He stood for a moment, drinking in the spirit and breath of the greenwood, and listening to the songs of nesting birds, then sauntered along the trail until he saw bright sunlight ahead and made his way to a natural clearing on the mountain slope. Through an opening between tall oak and hickory trees he looked down upon a little valley of sunny meadows. To the west, north, east, and south mountains and wooded hills girdled the little emerald valley, and through it a wide brook sparkled silver in and out of overhanging alders. Close by the brook delicate spirals of smoke floated upward from a group of small teepees. Back of him a wooded bank rose sharply, where the white blossoms of dogwood shone among a group of cedar and hemlock trees. The sun was high in the heavens, shining with bright warmth, and the cool shade of the evergreens and beauty of the dogwood looked inviting.

“A pleasant spot to eat,” thought Allen, as he opened his knapsack and spread his

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food on a flat rock beneath which trickled a little spring brook. His appetite was like himself—big and hearty—and when he had finished there was but a slice of bread left. This he crumbled and scattered over the rocks below, for the birds and squirrels. Then he stretched himself on a patch of thick moss and rested there in lazy contentment. A soft south wind touched his face caressingly. Below sounded the low gurgle of running water. Above him a bluebird sang tender notes, and with every breath he sensed the fresh woodsy odors of Maytime.

Gradually the blissful, carefree consciousness of the wood life gave way to an exquisite stupor, and he fell into restful, dreamless sleep, while the sun crept slowly westward till it sank behind the mountains, and the shadows lengthened into twilight. Then the furry and feathered night-people of the forest came out, and the wood was filled with the sound of their soft journeyings. The full, bright moon rode up over the mountains from the east, flooding the valley with its wonderful light.

From his peaceful slumber the young hunter was roused sharply, suddenly conscious that some noise had awakened him. In the tree overhead a screech-owl rendered

a melancholy dirge to the night; but it was not this sound that had awakened him, Allen thought, as he lay blinking drowsily; nor was it the hungry howl of wolves up the mountain. Presently it came again—the sound of voices, the low guttural tones of Indians. Allen sniffed the air; he scented sassafras and green birch smoke.

“There’s an Indian campfire hereabouts,” he thought. He listened again, then crept cautiously toward the edge of the steep bank. Below he saw a fire burning, and the light from the blazing embers revealed dim figures squatting in a circle. As he leaned forward to get a better look, an old tree stump gave way where his shoulder rested, and he was hurled downward, amidst stones and loosened earth. He felt a stinging blow on his head, a violent wrench of his body and arm as he crashed to the ground. He saw a tall form bend over him, heard the murmur of voices, and then he knew no more.

When he opened his eyes he found himself lying on a pile of skins in an Indian wigwam. An Indian woman was bending over him, pouring oil into a great gash on his arm. Through his dulled senses the smell of burning cedar-wood reached him, and through the opening of the wigwam he

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saw the red glow of a fire, beside which stood a tall Indian girl, stirring something in a pot from which a light cloud of steam floated upward. Far off he heard a whip-poorwill calling. Was it a dream? Allen thought. Now a dark form at the opening of the wigwam shut out the sight of the fire, and he looked up to see a tall, dignified old Indian chief, who walked straight to where he lay and eyed him with a glance so keenly penetrating that, for a moment, Allen was startled, till he reassured himself with the thought that Indians were always friendly to him.

"I White Owl," said the Indian abruptly. "You from home of paleface?"

"I came from the English settlement," Allen answered, after pausing a moment to collect his thoughts.

"You go to home of paleface no more," announced the chief. "You White Owl's prisoner," and the old man walked away as abruptly as he had come.

Allen struggled to rouse himself, to marshal his thoughts. The Indians had always been his friends; but this tribe was new to him, and he wondered what they did with their prisoners. Then his thoughts trailed off into a confused mass of unanswerable

questions, and he struggled with vague memories. He tried to shake off the deadly stupor that was possessing him, but his mind only became more hazy. There was a ringing in his ears, and his eyes were dim; then he lapsed into unconsciousness, and knew not how long he lay there helpless, nor how faithfully the Indians tended his wounds in their simple fashion.

Allen awoke from his stupor one day to find the Indian girl watching by his side. When she saw that he was conscious she hastened away, returning with her father, White Owl. The old chief lifted Allen's injured arm, then let it drop heavily, lifted it again and let it drop; then he began to pinch the flesh. Not a sign of suffering showed on the face of the sick man. The old chief looked at the arm with great concern, then stalked out of the wigwam and into the forest. For three days Allen did not see him. Then the chief returned, bringing a peculiar brown burr.

"Three days I hunt for this," he said, holding out the burr. Stooping down, he began pricking the arm with the burr, inch by inch, from the wrist upward, till the blood oozed from every pore. He had almost reached the shoulder, when suddenly the sick

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man gave such a cry that the Indian girl sprang to his side. The old chief gave a grunt of satisfaction, threw the burr away, and without a word walked out of the wigwam. Feeling had returned to the injured arm. At first the soreness of the raw flesh was almost unendurable, but gradually the pain subsided, and from that day Allen gained slowly in strength, beginning to realize how well these strangers were caring for him. The old chief insisted that he smoke the leaves of bearberries as a safeguard against fever, and, mixed with killikinick, he found the flavor and odor sweet and pleasant and a good substitute for tobacco. White Owl's squaw administered copious draughts of a drink which she brewed from herbs and roots that smelled better than they tasted. One day, when a steaming bowl of this concoction was brought to him, Allen made such a wry face that Wenonah, the chief's daughter, nearly fell over him, giggling with glee. Stooping down, she stroked his hand, saying, "Man with eyes like the sky, this make you well!"

"Yes, I should think it might," he answered, smiling at the girl's mirth. "I should think it would kill or cure any living thing on earth!" And surely something was

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making him stronger—whether the herbs or the good care, he knew not.

No further reference was made to Allen's being a prisoner, and whenever the strangeness of his situation oppressed him he put the thoughts away, realizing that the Indians would offer no explanation till they chose to do so; that an attempt to escape would probably be fatal for him; and that, since he had no real need to return to the English settlement, he might content himself here.

White Owl's lodge stood at a little distance from those of his tribe. His three wigwams were built upon a hill, among tall pines and hemlocks, and at the foot of the hill a clear mountain brook tumbled over the rocks in a series of waterfalls. On clear days Allen limped out to a sheltered spot at the foot of a pine tree, where Wenonah spread wolf-skins on the ground. Through an opening between the trees he could look down upon the little group of teepees, and beyond them the patches of ripening maize.

Beyond the clearing Winbeam, the most beautiful of all the surrounding mountains, shut the rest of the world from view, giving the little valley a quiet seclusion, and making it a little world of its own.

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Allen loved all the wild beauty, but had it not been for the companionship of Wenonah, the young hunter would have been lonely. White Owl had little to say to him, the squaw not a word, and the men of the tribe avoided him. Only Wenonah was friendly.

"Man with eyes like the sky," she said one day, "I give you a name. You wounded in our lodge since Moon of Green Leaves, I call you Teola."

"Teola let it be," he laughed, much amused. As he grew stronger he encouraged the girl to talk, and was greatly entertained when she repeated old Indian legends, read him signs from the clouds, and imitated the calls of the wood creatures. Several times he was startled by the bark of a wolf behind him, until he learned to watch for the Indian girl to come stealing from behind a sheltering tree. She delighted in fooling him with these imitations of animals and birds. One day, hearing an owl hoot in a tree overhead, he looked up to see the girl's bright eyes laughing down at him from the branches above. Sometimes it was the whippoorwill call, a Bob White whistle, or the cooing of a wood dove. She imitated all nature sounds so cleverly that the white man marveled.

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One day, while Allen lay under the great spreading branches of a pine tree, he noticed for the first time a painting in White Owl's wigwam.

"What does it mean, Wenonah?" he asked, pointing to the picture of a wolf with one raised leg in which it carried a gun with the barrel pointed forward.

"That Indian's Totem. White Owl belong to Wolf Clan," explained Wenonah, and told him the legend of how the wolf became the totem sign of the Minsies. Many other legends she repeated as she pointed to the figures on the wigwams.

Sometimes Allen fell asleep while Wenonah repeated legends and chanted Indian songs in her soft, low voice. When he awoke he would find her there still, watching by him, and soon he felt a real fellowship for the devoted little savage. She was the brightest and handsomest Indian girl he had ever seen, and the most unusual, for she fished and hunted with the privilege and freedom of the Indian braves. The old chief was too fond of her to prohibit her rambling where she pleased, for she was his only child, and the pride of his old age. Living as she did in the open, Wenonah learned from all nature what was good for her. One day, when

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Allen presented her with a pine pillow, she threw it back to him, saying, "No, Teola, Wenonah no need lift for head. Wenonah want to grow tall and straight like the trees of the forest."

One morning Allen awoke earlier than usual. Throwing aside his blanket, he stepped out into the open, filling his lungs with the clear, aromatic air, breathing in the refreshing odors of the pines. Wandering down towards the brook below, he reached the waterfalls just in time to see Wenonah, with her luxuriant black hair dripping with water, come skimming up over the rocks with the swiftness and agility of a deer. He thought he had never seen such a wholesome creature.

"You look as fresh as the morning," he greeted her, as she sprang along a ledge and came to his side. "Where have you been?"

"Wenonah go into water to make clean. Omeme say Wenonah is as clean and as pure as the flowers that grow."

"Who is Omeme?" Allen asked, as he looked admiringly at the perfect bare limbs of the girl, the water still glistening on her smooth brown skin.

"Omeme ride up the trail in the Moon of Bright Nights, Teola, one moon before you

come. Omeme come with her paleface brave when the Great Spirit come over Winbeam, and they know not the trail. White Owl say, 'Stay; eat and sleep at my lodge,' and they stay till Great Spirit come again over Winbeam, then Indian brave go with them to show trail."

"And the sun, from sleep awaking,
Started up and said, 'Behold me!'"

"Yo-wah!" cried the girl as she sprang to a ledge above Allen, where she stood motionless and erect, in an attitude of worship, with her face turned toward the rising sun, then, with hand uplifted, "Listen," she whispered, "the Spirit Bird sings," and from the stillness of the forest there floated the leisurely golden voice of the woodthrush, mellow and serene, with the peace of heaven in its notes.

"Ah, Teola, the Great Spirit is pleased with his people. Are you not glad to live in our valley, where the Spirit Bird sings, and the waters laugh?" she cried joyously.

"Yes, Wenonah, I am happy here," Allen answered, and for a long time he sat musing after she had left him, thinking of the simplicity of this Indian girl's religion, and her joy and content in all things created.

Then he fell to wondering why he was kept a prisoner. Wenonah could tell him if

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he asked her; but he hastily put the thought aside as unworthy. No! He could not take advantage of the girl's friendship. He assured himself that these Indians were not bloodthirsty savages, but simple, quiet natives of the mountains, clannish and suspicious, but not cruel. When they wanted to release him they would do so. Meanwhile their reason for mistrusting him was a mystery.

One morning when Allen awoke he found by his side his fishing fork, and this encouraged him to ask if they had found his rifle also; but the old chief gravely shook his head and made no answer. That night White Owl held a consultation with the men of his tribe, and Allen resolved to break through their Indian reserve by demanding their reason for keeping him a prisoner.

In a sheltered nook under the hill, by a pure cold spring called Tuppillowantica, the tribe held their councils. Here they had a bright fire burning, and the air was filled with the odor of roasting venison. Allen thought it a striking spectacle—the dark swaying branches of the trees against the starry sky above; below, the campfire flaming, sputtering, leaping upward, lighting the dusky faces of the Indians, who squatted around it in a circle.

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Allen made his way openly to the council fire. When he came within hearing distance there was silence. With a few grunts the braves greeted him, but no one spoke a word. He attempted several times to demand the explanation he desired, but their suspicious glances and dogged silence made him so uneasy that he finally left the council and walked back to his wigwam.

"They say nothing," he thought, "but they convey more in a single look than a white man could say in many words. They do not trust me—" and the thought troubled him, for he had always been accepted as a friend in Indian camps.

In his close contact with White Owl's family Allen had found them cleaner and more prosperous than any Indians he had known. The old chief provided well for his family, and insisted that his people work to provide for themselves. He governed his little tribe well, and they seemed to be always at peace. White Owl claimed all the forests, valleys and streams, south and east of Macopin, where Wickadouma, their landmarks, loomed huge and dark on the mountain's crest. The few Indians in these valleys came to White Owl for counsel, as to a kind father.

"I think for the good of my people," the old chief said to Allen one day. "My people have plenty to eat because I teach them how to provide, and when they go to trade with paleface I go with them, so that no brave of my tribe gets firewater to take his senses away." And the young Englishman thought, "Many good lessons might my own people learn from these forest folk."

Sometimes Allen grew tired of the Indian cookery—their succotash, half-cooked meat, queer roots and herbs; but they always had plenty of berries and brook trout, and quantities of maple sugar which they made from the sap of the sugar-maples that grew near the big lodge. They shared with Allen the best they had, and he grew strong on the simple diet.

Since Allen had dropped unexpectedly into this Indian camp in the month of May, the months had slipped quickly by. Moons, the Indians called them. Moon of Strawberries, the Thunder Moon, and Green Corn Moon all had passed by. Now the Moon of Falling Leaves was here, and still he waited for release. One day White Owl disappeared from the camp and no word was spoken at the lodge about his departure. As the days went by Allen noticed that not a warrior

"Let me do that, Wenonah," he said, attempting to take the stone mallet away from her.

"No, Teola!" she cried. "You chase deer. This Wenonah's work."

On their long rambles in the woods and over the mountains, Wenonah gathered every edible berry and root, and when the nuts ripened in the autumn she stored them away for the winter.

One morning she and Allen started out with rude baskets to gather chestnuts. Half a moon had gone by since heavy frosts and autumn gales sent ripe nuts rattling to the ground, with a chill in the air foretelling the approach of winter. Then, all the color in God's world mingled on the mountain-side and in the valley—golden yellow blended with emerald green; burning scarlet flamed against smoldering crimson! Now the days grew warm again. Nuts lay sweet and dry and brown under crispy dead leaves. The world was wrapped in sleepy warmth. The air was hazy, and the sun shone dimly through a golden atmosphere. It was the Indian Summer, the season the red man loved, a special gift of his favorite God, the God of the Southwest, who sent soft winds and golden warmth.

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This was a day to be remembered. A Dream Day! Half unconsciously Allen watched Wenonah, as she moved lightly among the trees; at her cheeks glowing with rich, dusky red; at her supple form as she stooped to brush the leaves aside and scooped up nuts by the handful. They filled their baskets, and were starting back to the lodge, when suddenly the girl stopped short. "Look Teola," she said, pointing down the trail, and Allen, looking, saw a long line of tall, straight figures advancing toward them.

Three weeks had passed since White Owl had disappeared from camp; three weeks since an Indian had gone along the trail. Now as the figures advanced in single file, Allen recognized White Owl and his braves. There was something noble and impressive about these Indians, the young man thought, as he watched them come nearer, and with a friendly salute he greeted them from the hilltop. He felt no fear at their approach. He was truly glad to see the old Chief, and down through the hazel brush he made his way to meet him.

"Welcome home!" he said, as he laid his hand on White Owl's shoulder, and to his surprise there was an answering look of friendliness in the old Chief's eyes, a look such as he had never seen there before.

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"Prisoner no more!" said White Owl abruptly. "You no spy. We let you go free. Paleface treat Indian fair; Indian treat Paleface fair. At Great Council we meet Red Fox. He say you good friend to Indian."

For a moment Allen was silent, while the truth slowly dawned upon him. He remembered that there had been many disputes as to land seized by the settlers from the Indians. Now there came to his mind a vision of that May night when he had leaned over the bank to gaze down upon White Owl's tribe gathered in council. As in a dream, he remembered the voice of the old Chief saying: "We go to the Great Council-fire to make peace with paleface. We sell our land. If paleface steal our land, on warpath we go." Then Allen had fallen into their midst. It was all plain to him now! These Indians, always suspicious, had taken him for a spy when he had fallen by their council-fire, thinking that he had been listening to their plans, as a scout for the settlers, and so they had kept him a prisoner, lest he tell their plans to the English!

"My good old Chief!" he cried, grasping the Indian's hand, "so you thought me a spy! You thought I would help steal your

land. Not I, good Chief! My heart is all for you and your people." Then he added, "You have been to the Council. Tell me about it."

"Ugh, Great Council," said White Owl solemnly. "We, the Minsies, meet with the Mingos at Lenapewihittuck, river of the Lenni-Lenape; where the waters thunder and the Council-fires burn. Chief of the pale-face say, 'Let there be peace! We will buy your land, and the Indians who have captured our people must let them go free!' Then Tedyeskung, Chief of the Lenape, say to his people, 'Let your paleface captives go. This day we are paid for our land. We will depart!' And Great Chief buries hatchet deep in the ground."

Now White Owl turned to his daughter and addressed her in her native tongue, and as he spoke he threw a wampum necklace over her head. As Allen listened to the old Chief's words, their meaning seemed to burn his brain. The girl had been standing close to the white man. Now as her father presented her with the necklace "for good duty," she spoke:

"Wenonah no want necklace. Wenonah want Teola," and she laid her face caressingly against Allen's arm. For a moment

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anger held Allen silent, while a dull red surged over his face. Then, with a gesture of contempt, he pushed the girl from him. This savage! He had called her a Child of Nature; a fawn, a mountain nymph—everything that was wild and sweet and beautiful, and now, when he spoke, his voice was harsh.

"And you would have killed me, you little savage! You were set to watch me. If I had tried to escape, you would have killed me! You! who nursed me back to health, and romped in the mountains with me."

Humbly the girl looked up at him, looked unfalteringly into his burning eyes, then, slipping to the ground in front of him, she clasped both arms about his knees, looking up at him as a whipped dog looks at its angry master.

"Yes, Teola, Wenonah has death-arrow here," and she drew forth a long sharp flint arrow-head. "With this, Wenonah would have killed Teola if he go. And this," she slipped another arrow from her pouch—"with this, Wenonah would have killed herself to go to Happy Spirit Land to be Teola's squaw."

Allen's tense muscles relaxed, and as he looked down at the girl the red anger slowly

died out of his face. "Yes," he thought, "she was all that he had called her, everything that was wild, untamed, and beautiful, with the mind and instincts of a savage. She had only done her duty in watching him—and she would have sacrificed her own life with his."

His thoughts traveled quickly. He looked at the faces around him, now lighted with a new friendliness and good will. These people had treated him well; they had shared their best with him; a stranger and a prisoner. Would *his* people have treated a captive so well? They were willing to spare his life if they gained their end; they had gained it—the government had paid them for their land, and they were satisfied. Now they stood around him, friendly, like peaceful children.

His eyes traveled over the little valley, all wrapped in the soft golden haze of Indian Summer. He had learned to love it—this valley nestling in the mountains; its wildness and beauty were akin to his own rugged, unsoiled nature. And this Indian girl kneeling at his feet—he *loved* more than anything else in his life.

"Come, Wenonah," he said gently, raising her to her feet, "Teola will buy this valley, and you shall live here forever, and be Teola's squaw!"

GLOSSARY.

- Hoboken, at the place of reeds and rushes.
Killikinick, mixture of barks and leaves.
Kohannah, swift.
Kôwe, Indian cry of triumph.
Lake Hopatcong, at the waterfall.
Lenapewihittuck, river of the Lenape.
Lenni-Lenape, native; the original or pure Indian.
Macopin, wild potato.
Mingos, one of the northern tribes of Lenape.
Minsi or Wolf Tribe, people of a stony country.
Moon of Bright Nights, April.
Moon of Green Leaves, May.
Moon of Strawberries, June.
Thunder Moon, July.
Green Corn Moon, August.
Moon of Falling Leaves, October.
Passaic, in the valley.
Pequannock, land made clear for cultivation.
Pompton, wry-mouth.
Preakness, a young buck.
Tedyeskung, The Healer.
Teola, wounded in the lodge.
Totowa, to sink, dive under, but rise again.
Tuppillowantica, pure cold spring.

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Wanaque, from Wanki; peace, repose.

Wenonah, eldest daughter.

Wickadouma, Black Rock.

Winbeam, from Wimb, the heart of a tree.

Yapewi, on the river bank.

Yowah, exclamation of delight and content
for the Creator and Created.

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